On the morning of August 1st, the garrison of the L. Guards Dragoon Regiment entered Shirvint with a platoon of the 5th battery of the L. Guards Horse Artillery and a platoon of the machine-gun crew. In the morning, everything was calm and nothing foreshadowed a battle. Only during the day did enemy reconnaissance noticeably increase, and at five o'clock in the afternoon, large columns of dust first began to indicate the movement of significant columns along the highway from Vilune, some of which were soon discovered from the Dragoon observation post on the bell tower of the Shirvint church; I say "partially", because the enemy obviously knew the significance of this bell tower and its field of vision well, adapted perfectly to the terrain and moved covertly from the possibility of observation from it. Then soon the enemy opened artillery fire on Shirvint. At the first definite signs of an enemy attack, the division was raised on alert and units occupied their sectors, according to the order. given in advance for such a case*)

1. The Life Guards Dragoon Regiment with a machine gun platoon defended the city of Shirvint and posted rifle lines along its western and southern outskirts; the 5th battery joined its duty platoon in a position on the northwestern outskirts of Vladislavov, near the cemetery.

2. The Life Guards Hussar Ye. V. Regiment occupied the village of Meyshty and formed the right flank of the position, with the task of ensuring the location of the entire division on the right and observing the roads along the northern bank of the Sheshupa, bypassing our flank.

3. The 2nd battery and the Life Guards The Uhlan Regiment of the Her Majesty's Army took up a chosen position south of Vladislavov, among the sandy hills, in a step forward, in order to engage the enemy advancing on Shirvint with flanking fire.

4. The L. Guards Horse Grenadier Regiment formed the general reserve of the division and took up a position at the southeastern outskirts of Vladislavov, hidden behind a fold in the terrain and suburban buildings.

5. The division headquarters with my convoy, sapper and machine-gun teams - with the reserve.

The enemy artillery opened fire at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, concentrating it on the city. Shirvint and bridges and only partly transferring shells to Vladislavov. Gradually increasing, this fire reached considerable strength around 6 o'clock. The enemy apparently deployed two field and one howitzer batteries,

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whereby one field battery, advanced in a ledge forward, stood in the area of the village of Varupenen, i.e. opposite our right flank; a howitzer battery stood on the Viluna highway, but out of reach of our field guns, and the second field battery was a little to the south of the highway, although we were unable to determine its position precisely. The intensity of the enemy fire grew and reached its highest point at about 7 o'clock in the evening. The Germans, as usual, fired very high bursts, and therefore this fire, compared with its intensity, did not cause much harm. The town of Shirvint was positively showered with shrapnel, which fell mainly on the tiled roofs of houses, made a lot of noise and a strong moral impression, but, I repeat, compared to the tension, it did not cause much damage. The Kirka watchtower, our obvious observation point for the enemy, was very heavily shelled. In the Dragoon Regiment there were a number of wounded and a number of shell-shocked, including several officers and the regiment commander himself. A shrapnel bullet broke the outside of Staff Captain Sievers's field bag and remained inside the bag - as a souvenir. Only one howitzer grenade hit a small Jewish house in Vladislavov, broke through the wall, entered the room and, exploding, wounded the entire family living in it. An original detail for the beginning of the war: several Jewish residents ran to me in a daze, told me about this incident and, holding me responsible for it, insistently began to demand that measures be taken to ensure that such things do not happen again.

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No other serious damage was found in the buildings. The enemy's southern battery unsuccessfully searched for our 2nd battery and occasionally threw its shrapnel at the hilly area south of Vladislavov. For the last two hours the enemy also kept the bridges and the valley of the Shirvinty River south of the city, covered with bushes, under heavy fire. In view of the possibility of the enemy approaching from the south, a platoon of machine guns under Lieutenant de Witt was posted against it with orders to observe the valley and prevent the enemy from approaching along it; After the advance, as will be said below, of the Ulan, which was visible from Shirvinta, this danger, of course, passed. Of our batteries, the 5th battery acted especially brilliantly. Its commander, Colonel Bar. Velio, managed to choose for himself an excellent observation post on the opposite bank of the Shirvinta River, from which he managed to discover the location of the northern German battery and with his fire not only force it to silence, but, having inflicted serious losses on it, even force it to hastily abandon its position and leave the battle. The fire of this German battery ceased unexpectedly at about 7 o'clock in the evening. The next day at dawn our patrol of Cornet Dvorzhitsky, sent to the side of Varupenen, easily found the camp site of this battery by the clear

signs of the losses it had suffered: bloody helmets and equipment items, abandoned trays with unfired cartridges and even the commander's rangefinder, the tube of which was pierced through, were lying around the position

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shrapnel bullet. How hasty the flight must have been, it cannot be called otherwise, of this battery, not to even take with it the commander's rangefinder, still almost fit for use! This rangefinder, as the first trophy, the division of the L. Guards Horse Artillery sent to Petrograd to be presented to the August Inspector General of Artillery, Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich.

The 2nd battery worked little, because in the area of its fire there were few targets for it, which, however, was quite natural in view of its aforementioned special purpose. Apart from artillery fire, the enemy did not show any signs of intending to take action, although, as was later discovered, Colonel Knyazhevich had large cavalry columns concentrated out of range of our batteries and as hidden as possible on the Viluno highway itself and on either side of it - presumably the entire 1st German Cavalry Division, with the addition of a howitzer battery from the infantry, which was not normally part of a cavalry division.

Around 6 o'clock in the evening, in order to get acquainted with the situation on the spot, I sent a detachment to the city. Shirvint Senior Adjutant of the Division Staff Captain Baron Nolken, and on the right flank in the village of Meyshty of the Retinue of E. V. Major General Count Mengden. The latter, upon his return, reported to me that no active actions had been detected against our right flank of the enemy and that no action could be expected from him. Unfortunately, we, for our part, also did not

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flank did not show any activity, meanwhile, it would seem that the transfer of lava or even strong patrols to the western bank of the Sheshupa would correspond to the situation and could be useful in terms of attracting the attention of the enemy, and, in connection with the brilliant work of the 5th battery, perhaps even yield results. The report of Captain Baron Nolken stated that the commander of the Life Dragoons was completely calm about his position and did not need anything. On our left flank, after occupying the initial position according to the disposition, Colonel Knyazhevich, in pursuance of my instructions, began to advance parts of his regiment forward in sparse flank movements at a fast pace, which did not attract the enemy's attention and therefore was accomplished without losses. The

undulating, sandy terrain was favorable to this and in this way the greater part of the Ulan was gradually concentrated on the eastern bank of the Shirvinta River in its sharply jutting bend toward the enemy. In this way the regiment occupied a very advantageous flank position in relation to the roads leading to the city of Shirvint and at the same time, having significantly advanced forward towards the enemy, received good observation points from which it could approximately determine the location of the main masses of the enemy cavalry. Having thus discovered a number of good targets for our artillery, Colonel Knyazhevich sent a message to the 2nd battery and wanted to transfer it to himself in order to fire at these discovered groups of enemy cavalry, to which the distance from

the battery position was too large. However, at that very time the enemy was definitely looking for the 2nd battery, and therefore its move across relatively open terrain would have been too risky and therefore, unfortunately, the battery commander, Colonel Kirpichev, did not consider it possible to carry it out; this decision, which I learned about only when it was already too late, cannot be approved of, because I believe that the goals were worth the risk.

Around 7 o'clock in the evening, unexpectedly, a division of His Majesty's Cuirassier Regiment with the 4th battery of the L. Guards approached Vladislavov at alternating gaits. Horse artillery, under the command of Colonel Kolenkin, sent on his own initiative by the Chief of the 1st Guards, Cavalry Division, General Kaznakov, to provide us with all possible assistance - an exemplary, excellent arrangement. The division and battery were sent by me to Shirvint at the disposal of General Count Nirod, where, however, they did not manage to take a serious part in the battle. Almost immediately after the Cuirassiers, an infantry detachment approached Vladislavov from the east along the main road, the appearance of which was even more unexpected and which turned out to be a hunting detachment of an infantry regiment, the number and name of which, to my great regret, I do not remember. The commander of the detachment reported that he had arrived at my disposal and that a battalion of the same regiment was closely following him. Indeed, about half an hour later the indicated battalion also approached. Its commander reported to me,

that he was moving to Shirvint and could have arrived much earlier, by several hours, but on orders from above he was stopped at a halt about 10 miles away, and then, probably when our report was received about the enemy's advance or when this became clear from the strength of the artillery fire, he received orders to proceed urgently to Shirvint at my disposal. The battalion received orders from me to proceed to Shirvint without stopping, where by nightfall they would replace the Dragoons, form a garrison for the city and set up their own guard; The dragoons

were ordered to give the battalion a cavalry unit to form, as always, ambushes ahead of the security line and outposts on the flanks at the fords, as well as to serve as patrols. The unexpected appearance of this battalion confirmed the lack of communication services in the army and the especially careless attitude of the army headquarters to the matter of properly orienting us, who were standing on the border, about everything that was happening behind us, what we could count on and who, if necessary, to rely on. If this battalion had not been detained for some unknown reason 10 versts from us and had it arrived in time, or even if I had been informed that the infantry unit was so close and would soon arrive, the battle near Shirvint that day could have been conducted differently and more active. Every cavalry officer will understand me when I say that my first thought at the beginning of the battle was to create the possibility of attacking in mounted formation, but then the conditions of the situation gradually forced me to refrain from this idea, because

the terrain on the German side with those damned wire fences made the deployment of a line of a significant number of squadrons impossible, the enemy's superiority in artillery under these conditions gave him an advantage, and most importantly, there was Shirvint with its bridge, the possession of which should have been assured to us. In order to be able to reach the cavalry attack, it was necessary to lure the enemy to our side (the advance of the Uhlans had this secret goal, I will say, more accurately - hope) and then have the opportunity to maneuver with all the forces of the division and obviously develop with the entire division what the Uhlans of Her V. partially accomplished - that is, maneuver the left flank forward. But for such a maneuver it was necessary to have a reliable and secured axis behind us, which was the city of Shirvint, meaning to be confident in the possession of the city and its bridges. While the division was left to its own forces and there was absolutely no reason to count on any support, the defense of the city and its bridges became the most important task and took precedence over everything. When the battalion arrived and this task was secured, it was already too late, twilight had set in.

Around 8 o'clock in the evening, the enemy's fire completely ceased. Columns of dust and reports from our observers indicated that the enemy columns had moved back to Viluny. The battle ended and then the division's units began to return to their bivouacs. In the city of Sirvinte, in several places, apparently as a result of shelling, fires broke out; which, however,

thanks to the energetically taken measures, it was soon extinguished.

What task could the enemy have had during this operation? Judging by the way the battle was conducted, one must think that the task consisted only of

reconnaissance and determining the strength of our occupation of Shirvinty; the enemy probably did not have any serious active tasks, especially since after July 29 and, in addition, thanks to undoubted espionage, the presence of our division could not have remained unknown to him. For the division this battle brought undoubted benefit in the spiritual and educational sense: the regiments were bombarded with fire, both field and howitzer artillery, and were convinced that it was not so terrible in its results. The people entered the combat situation and got used to it. When the battle was over, I went to Shirvint to go around the Dragoons and thank them. It was pleasant to look at the calm, contented faces of the people and hear their loud, self-confident voices in response to my greetings. I felt and understood that I could be confident in them and be calm about their military spirit, that any order of mine would be carried out with the greatest zeal, whatever it might be, and that they would never give in. The spiritual education was completed - and there was no need to think about it anymore.

In 1925, a publication was published by the German State Archives (read between the lines - the General Staff, which, according to the Versailles Treaty, should not exist)

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Official History of the Great War, entitled Der Weltkrieg 1914-1918. Volume II of this edition is a description of military actions during the operations of both our armies, Rennenkampf and Samsonov, in East Prussia. The actions of our cavalry are described rather briefly and there are no great details, but for that there are also completely false ones. There is not a single word about the battle of August 1, but on page 72 it is said that the Commander of the 1st German Corps, to which the 1st German Cavalry was temporarily subordinated. division, ordered the commander of the latter, having reinforced him with several infantry battalions and artillery, to carry out an offensive against the Russian cavalry near the city of Shirvint from August 2 to 15, but that the commander of the division, General Brecht, did not carry out this, since he "received information about the enemy's strong occupation of the city"! It must be assumed that this instruction is not entirely correct, since General Brecht himself had already personally carried out such an offensive the day before and was ingloriously repulsed, and therefore was personally convinced of the strength of the occupation of Shirvint and did not want to risk it a second time.

G. Rauch.

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Endnote:

*) A search of the entire division on July 29 on the Vilunin-Zodargen line, a number of patrol reports and prisoners' testimony indicated that the German 1st Cavalry

Division consisting of 6 regiments was located directly in front of us. Then, allowing for the possibility of active actions on its part, after artillery reconnaissance, an order was given on the procedure for occupying a combat position in the event of an alarm.